

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

3

TO THE GRADUATES

OF THE

MEDICAL DEPARTMENT

OF

PENNSYLVANIA COLLEGE.

DELIVERED AT THE PUBLIC COMMENCEMENT, MARCH 5, 1853.

BY

FRANCIS G. SMITH, JR., M.D.,

PROFESSOR OF THE INSTITUTES OF MEDICINE.

PUBLISHED BY THE CLASS.

PHILADELPHIA:

C. SHERMAN, PRINTER.

1853.



CORRESPONDENCE.

PHILADELPHIA, February 22d, 1853.

PROF. SMITH:—

DEAR SIR,—At a meeting of the Class of the Medical Department of Pennsylvania College (Mr. P. R. WAGENSELLER being called to the chair, and W. R. L. SHARP appointed Secretary), the undersigned were appointed a committee to solicit for publication a copy of the Valedictory Address to be delivered by you at the coming Commencement.

Yours, very respectfully,

JOHN SHARP, New Jersey.

JOHN H. WILSON, New Brunswick.

BARTOW DARRACH, New York.

DAVID HALL, Delaware.

H. C. BERRIE, Georgia.

J. H. YOCUM, Pennsylvania.

T. T. PRICE, New Jersey.

R. B. HARRIS, Mississippi.

RUFUS KREBS, Virginia.

WM. H. WAGNER, Maryland.

W. H. DANIELS, Tennessee.

CHAS. S. BARNITZ, Ohio.

SEPHUS COLE, South Carolina.

E. H. HENRY, Illinois.

JAMES HAY, Glasgow, Scotland.

J. W. ROWE, Philadelphia.

ALFRED WYNKOOP, Louisiana.

J. C. GILBERT, Pennsylvania.

PHILADELPHIA, February 23d, 1853.

GENTLEMEN:—

I have this evening received your polite note, requesting a copy of my Valedictory Address for publication.

If the gentlemen whom you represent are willing to take it unheard, I will most cheerfully place it at their disposal, and will transmit a copy to you in a few days.

Please convey to the Class my thanks for this renewed expression of kind feeling, with my warmest wishes for their success, and accept for yourselves the assurances of undiminished regard, with which I am

Yours, sincerely and truly,

FRANCIS G. SMITH, JR.

To Messrs. JOHN SHARP,

JOHN H. WILSON,

BARTOW DARRACH,

DAVID HALL,

H. C. BERRIE, and others,

Committee.

291 Spruce Street.

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN OF THE GRADUATING CLASS:—It has become my duty to address a few parting suggestions to you, at a moment, when, if I may be permitted to judge of your feelings by my own, there must be a strange conflict of emotions. You have now reached another, and a fearfully responsible starting-point in the great journey of life. Nay, you may be said practically, to be about taking your *first step* in life, in its active, manly duties; a step which no one can take without tender recollections of the past, and a sense of timidity as to the future. Behind you lie the days of your dependent boyhood, with all its joys and transient sorrows. Before you, the untried fields of toils and labors, with

“The losses and the crosses that active man engage,
The tears all, the fears all, that dim declining age.”

You are now about to unfold a new page in your individual history, and how are all your relations altered! To the past, you can no longer cling; you have fulfilled its requirements; it has prepared you for new scenes and for higher exertions. What the future shall be, who can pretend to tell. Heretofore you have occupied the ranks of students engaged in researches of the most difficult and important character. Your only responsibility has been that of improving your time and numerous advantages, so that you might discharge with honor and credit to yourselves, and with benefit to the community, the office of a practitioner of the healing art. But, while engaged in the pursuit of science, while occupied in adding day by day, new resources to the great treasure-house of knowledge, you have insensibly lost sight of the moment which should introduce you to the exercise of your profession, which should transfer you from the seat of learning, to the bedside of suffering, where you will be called upon to apply the principles which

it has been our object to furnish you. And thus time has been hurrying you imperceptibly forward to this moment of intense interest, when it becomes our duty to send you forth upon the world, grateful for the kind attention which you have given to our instructions, and anticipating for you, nay *invoking* in your behalf, a bright, honorable, happy future. Remember, gentlemen, that our deep interest in you cannot cease with your connexion with this Institution. We are bound to you by ties which the ceremonies of this day cannot sever. We, to whom your medical training has been in a measure committed, are deeply involved, whether in your successes, or defeats. We come before you, sustaining in a modified degree the relation of the Roman matron, who, when intrusting to her son the shield of an honored father, demanded at his hands, that he should come back to her either *with* it, or *upon* it; charging him in these few and expressive words, that he should not dishonor the noble blood of which that shield was at once the pledge and witness, but die, if die he must, in defence of the fair fame of a noble ancestry. Hence it is that to you, and to us alike, this is a season of no trifling moment. We have given you, in the presence of this assembly, the Diploma of our Institution, the broad seal of your commission for the arduous but honorable work of the medical profession. We have done it cheerfully; feeling that you have earned this mark of confidence at our hands. We have done it *conscientiously*, knowing full well, the responsibility with which society has invested us, knowing our *duty*, which would forbid the sending forth of one man, who for any cause was inadequate to the service which the world will demand at his hands. And we ask that you would associate, in all coming time, with that Diploma, the elevated position, the high attainments, and the noble self-sacrifice which become one who has consecrated his life to the work of administering to human suffering. You have ere this commended yourselves to us by your diligent search for truth, by your courtesy, and by an irreproachable demeanor. And it is this which emboldens me to address to you, on behalf of my colleagues, plainly and affectionately, a few thoughts in reference to your future position as accredited physicians.

If we look for a moment at the real position in society of the medical practitioner, we shall hazard nothing in the assertion that next to the sacred work of the ministry, there is none more re-

sponsible, or more generally appreciated by the community at large. The intelligent, well-read, high-minded, and above all, conscientious physician, holds a place scarcely inferior to Him to whom are committed the healing of the souls of men. To establish this, it is enough to know, that under God, he is intrusted with the issues of life or death. He has interests confided to him which expand and widen, embracing not only families, but large communities,—it may be whole nations. Mark him at the bedside of a patient, in whom the almost desperate struggle between life and death is raging. Think of the importance of that single life to a family who are anxious witnesses of the contest. Think of the unbounded confidence reposed in his counsels by the patient himself. See the agonizing, breathless interest, with which every look is scanned, every word weighed by wife, mother, or father, and you will realize, if you have never done so before, that you occupy a position fearfully prominent, and more than ordinarily responsible. But is it necessary to recur to such cases in illustration of this point? We have the concurrent testimony of every cultivated and well-regulated mind. We see it in the fact, that our profession is often indulged with a degree of confidence accorded to none others. We have it in the bond of deep affection which unites the physician and his patient. We have it in the ten thousand ties which every new scene of affliction begets on the part of those who have watched with us at the couch of suffering, until death has set his seal, and it only remained for us to weep with those that wept. I may even go further and say, that the feeling of every right-minded community towards a physician who deserves the name, is one of *unqualified reverence*. The eye that can penetrate the inmost recesses of that complicated, but beautiful machinery, which we recognise in our mortal bodies, and the hand that can adjust its irregular movements, are invested with an almost superhuman power in the estimation of those who feel their utter ignorance of this curious handiwork of God. And when we add to their veneration of genius and skill, the perfectly overwhelming feeling that they have been the favored, grateful objects of its healing power, we challenge for our common profession a place higher than any which even military prowess, or a dignified statesmanship can claim. And I say this, not in a spirit of vain boasting, or with a view to self-flattery, but that, knowing the position which you are now, from this time forth,

entitled to occupy, you may endeavor to qualify yourselves for it, by discharging with fidelity, and with a deep sense of your accountability to God and man, the various duties thence resulting.

But in saying this, Gentlemen, I would not delude you with the idea that an adequate estimate is in all, or even in most cases, placed upon the labor of OUR profession. We may, and often will be mortified by the reverse of all this. In none of the learned professions is the earthly reward commensurate with the toil which must be expended in its attainment. By the few who know what an education costs, what anxiety, self-devotion, and self-sacrifice are demanded for the securing of even moderate success, scientific attainments, and the unwearied effort to apply them for the good of others, may be appreciated. But by the masses, who can only measure labor by the physical exertion of the body, and who know not what it is to be prostrated and worn out by mental application, the hardest and most wearying of all toil, this cannot be the case. This is true of all the walks of science, but applies peculiarly to our own. Where is the reward adequate to repay the deep anxiety, the ceaseless study, the broken rest, the unseasonable exposures, the denial of the comforts and blandishments of home, the risk of life, daily, nay, hourly, in contact with the most virulent and formidable types of mortal diseases? We are very sure that the community rarely appreciates, or does justice to the sacrifices, so uniformly, and may I not say it, so *unostentatiously* made by the physician, especially in times of pestilence. Considering his devotion in the mere light of charity, there is no charity like his. Time, professional advice, medicines, personal, nay, even *menial* services, are all bestowed—*given away*. It is idle to talk of professional *duty*, when the multitude of sufferers, in the season of pestilence, are, as is well known, everywhere to be found amongst the poorest classes, to whom a public hospital is an asylum, a place of hope. There is no more obligation upon the medical man to give his all away in charity, and devote himself to the service of the poor, than upon any other man. But when does *he* talk about prudence, or think about risk, or even ask, as he might, why others of the community do not step forward to share his labor, privation, toil, and perils? And when he has given the benefit of all his study, midnight watching, unwearied and unwearying care, how often is he put aside to make way for the presumptuous, Heaven-defying experiments of some ignorant dreamer?

For all this you must be prepared. Our reward is not a mere earthly one, for if it were we might despair of the attempt to realize it. We have duties to discharge; a conscience to satisfy; a God to whom we must account, and we must labor on with a view to these, irrespective of the frowns, or discouragements which must be encountered. We must labor on, assured that we have the encouragement of the wise and good, and that if denied our full reward, we share but in common with the rest of mankind, who have been taught by the precepts of inspired truth, to look beyond the present, to the award of an omniscient and impartial Judge.

From what has now been said, you will be prepared for the suggestions which I propose, as briefly as possible, to offer for your consideration. An essay of a purely professional character will not be expected from me; the discussion of scientific subjects would be out of place here, and little consonant with the feelings of mingled joy and sadness that belong to this occasion. These have all had their due share of notice in your private studies, and in the instruction of the lecture-room. The relation of preceptor and pupil is at an end, and we are about to dismiss you, with our congratulations, to your respective fields of labor. Yet, let us linger a little on the way to these new and untried scenes, and beguile the time with a few kind hints, which, if duly heard, cannot fail to secure for you positions of dignity and usefulness, from which you may pass at death, with the blessed consciousness that you have not lived utterly in vain!

I have referred to the position to which you are entitled, and I trust will ere long occupy. But remember, it is a position for which certain qualifications are requisite, the same in general which must be possessed by every one, in whatever department of life his lot may be cast, who would merit the respect and affection of others. But to the physician they are especially necessary, from the fact, that by the very nature of his office, he is placed in the most delicate relation which can be sustained by any one man toward his fellow. The world does, and has a right to demand, that those who are of necessity charged with offices involving the extension of the highest, holiest confidence, should be men of probity, of a high moral character, above the reach of suspicion. It requires that they should not be liable to the possibility of being drawn into a line of conduct which would detract from the respect

which every honorable man guards with a jealous eye. The gossiping tale-bearer is not the man to be intrusted with secrets necessarily confided to every family physician. The heartless libertine is not the man to be called to the bedside of the young, the pure, and the uncontaminated; rather should he be shunned as a loathsome object whose very presence poisons the air he breathes. None but he who is lost to all self-respect could betray the facts often so frankly intrusted to him, and on which he must base his remedial efforts. And were there nothing more at stake than your own worldly prospects, your success in life, I could not err in impressing you with the conviction that any professional reputation which is not based upon a high-toned, fixed, and unswerving morality, will be found to be utterly without foundation. And to this end, it becomes me to exhort you, in all things to be guided by a pure conscience.

Were I to attempt to enlarge upon this head, and to apply it in all its bearings, I might exhaust your patience and my own strength. It is a principle of action which will cover the whole of life. For, whether we look at the intercourse of the physician with his medical brethren, where courtesy and a high-toned gentlemanly bearing are demanded, or observe the relations growing out of his own private practice, we shall find that he is invested with responsibilities that it becomes him well to heed, and that duties are required of him, from the faithful discharge of which he must not shrink. There are, and will be seasons when he will come in conflict with the views of men very different from his own. He may even encounter some of that miserable number who are unworthy of the trust with which a too credulous age has indulged them, who are ready to resort to unprofessional and unrecognised expedients, to low and wicked arts, in order to weaken confidence and supplant him in his fields of active labor. Base and unprincipled men are everywhere to be found. There is no profession so elevated, or so sacred, as to be effectually protected against these pests of society, these wolves in sheep's clothing. These are unworthy of your notice; a conflict with such would only be demeaning self, and lowering the true dignity of the profession. They are best left to themselves, to work out the deserved contempt, which sooner or later is to be their certain doom.

But with the members of the profession, who are recognised as

such, and enjoy the confidence of society, let your intercourse be that of gentlemen whose own self-respect would guard them from the painful exhibition of a spirit of strife and bickering. You may be called in consultation where measures are proposed to which you cannot assent; you may see lamentable proofs of weakness of intellect, or a want of thorough scientific attainments; but nothing short of wilful personal insult should ever be permitted to interfere with the courtesies and amenities of life on which your own standing and happiness so much depend. In all things, then, whether it be in your own practice, or your intercourse with the profession, let conscience be the guide of conduct. Remember that a blessing is yours, whether successful or otherwise, even the welcome approval of that monitor we all carry within us, whose power to soothe or torture needs no proof here.

I have spoken to you, Gentlemen, of the necessity of a reference to conscience, and a submission to its dictates in the matter of practice, whether thrown upon our own individual resources, or associated with others. In neither event may you surrender the well-established principles of science, or consent to tamper with empiricism. And in the latter case especially, that is when associated with others, you are to have a due regard to the feelings, motives, and conduct which are exhibited by them. You owe them the calm impartial consideration of their opinions, the same charitable indulgence, which under similar circumstances, you would claim for yourselves. In the quaint but emphatic language of an old writer, "though our heads may differ, let our hearts be one."*

But there is another department of duty, where a strict conscientiousness is imperatively demanded. It has been already alluded to in another part of this address, but I feel that it deserves and demands a fuller notice. I allude to the necessity for the utmost reserve in speaking of the patients who may intrust themselves to your care. This is a duty founded upon considerations which have been already pressed, and in which the attempt has been made to portray the intimacy of the relations existing between a physician and the families in which he is called to practise. The very fact that he is indulged with a confidence not extended to others, is the foundation of this duty, and should constitute its best safeguard.

That relation imposes a restraint which it were base and dishonorable to disregard. He is bound by no oath, it is true; a special promise of profound secrecy has never been extorted as the condition of his admission to the family, but it is all implied. He is permitted to see, hear, and know, what if exposed or repeated, might blast the peace of families. It is the very nature and effect of sickness to bring out peculiarities of temper, the foibles and infirmities even of the strongest intellects, and with them the medical attendant must necessarily be made familiar. But his mouth is closed, he is deterred from their publication abroad by considerations, to the weight of which an oath could not lend solemnity. The very fact that he has so much in his power, only enhances the sacred dignity of a calling so responsible, and he recoils in honest indignation, from the bare suggestion that he could be brought to assume the garb of a betrayer. To invade the sanctity of the fireside, destroy its peace, and wrest from it every element of happiness, who shall lend himself to such a work,—where can be found among your number the man so base! But, independently of all this, nothing will go so far to undermine a man as the habit of talking indiscriminately of the physical maladies of his patients, especially in reference to personal peculiarities. All men who are not lost to self-respect will point the finger of unmitigated scorn at the physician who could sacrifice principle to the indulgence of a habit of gossiping. And be his talents or attainments what they may, they will but aggravate his ruin, when thrust aside, marked and avoided as a tale-bearer, or a revealer of secrets. On this point, the propriety of which must commend itself to your judgment, it behooves you to be especially guarded. A young practitioner fired by the thought that he is indeed engaged in the duties of the profession of his choice is very naturally tempted to refer to his patients, their maladies, and other points of interest; but if he value his own character, and his future standing, let his words be few and wary.

Gentlemen, in looking at the physician and the part he is required to sustain upon the theatre of life, another prominent qualification forces itself upon our notice. He must be a *brave man*. Not reckless, daring, insensible to consequences, which ignorance often makes synonymous with courage, but a brave man is the true meaning of the term. There are Empirics, the world is full of them,

who would attempt an operation in surgery from which the learned Anatomist and the prudent Surgeon would shrink with trembling, for

“Fools madly rush, where angels fear to tread.”

Bravery is that coolness, assurance, and self-reliance which is the result of high attainments, a careful practice, and a knowledge which marks accurately the limits within which there is safety, beyond which there is peril. It is an element in the medical character, the want of which cannot but materially affect the physician. He is liable daily and hourly to be brought in direct contact with the most loathsome, infectious and mortal diseases to which man is subject. He cannot turn a deaf or unwilling ear to a summons under such circumstances. He must not, when compelled to face the enemy, shrink in the hour of danger, to his own shameless exposure and to the injury of the suffering. He may avail himself of any precautionary measures which his knowledge of hygienic laws may suggest, but after all he must throw himself upon *His* Providence, “who holdeth our souls in life,” trusting that in the fearless discharge of his bounden duties, “the pestilence that walketh in darkness, and the sickness that destroyeth at the noonday” shall not be allowed to come nigh him. Some seem to be miraculously protected, others have fallen nobly in the service of their fellow-men, and they will be remembered on earth, and also in *His* presence, when the monuments and the records of the proudest on earth shall have passed into eternal oblivion.

Gentlemen, those who thus fall before the destroyer, victims to their own humanity and courage, and to their devotion to the cause of the sick and the dying, deserve the name of *heroes*, and are worthy of the honors we are so willing to bestow on those, who, in another field expose life and limb in the service of their country. But on the field on which the physician volunteers,—and always and everywhere he is a volunteer,—there are no drum and trumpet to lure him on, no banners or waving plumes, no fervor of strife or prospect of fame, no “pomp and circumstance of glorious war,” to excite his ambition and stimulate his courage. Oh no, it is the poor who swell the army of pestilence; and poverty and destitution, squalid and miserable penury, disease in its most appalling forms, human agony and helplessness, and terror and woe, the sick bed

and the death-bed, the hearse and the house of mourning, are the sole incentives to this field of danger—alas! that it is not one of glory—in which physicians labor, struggle, *perish*, save many lives and lose so often their own, without reward or the expectation of it, often without the show of gratitude or even the mockery of it. Surely this is heroism, and heroism of the noblest and grandest character. The Lacedæmonians considered it the most glorious epitaph they could place above the bones of the dead at Thermopylæ, that they lay there “in obedience to the laws.” But the physician who falls in the discharge of his duty, deserves the more glorious one, that he fell, *not* in obedience to law, or compulsion, *not* from ambition or the temptation of reward, but from *simple, pure humanity!*

But the courage of the physician will be tested in other scenes! At an instant's warning he may be summoned to the most complicated operation in the whole domain of surgery, or he may be brought in contact with threatening maladies in which not a moment can be lost with safety, and where he must call to his aid the most powerful of remedial agents. And he must do it despite the fear or entreaties even of interested friends, who tremble at the thought of the consequences which may ensue. He does it resolutely, calmly, because at home in his science, perhaps scarcely venturing to augur a favorable result, and yet prepared to meet the unkind looks, and reproachful words of those who would refer the melancholy issue to the practice pursued, rather than to the enemy who had secured his victim before any adequate effort could be made to dispute possession. Yes, Gentlemen, the ordinary practitioner whose quiet routine of duty attracts but little of this world's notice, and none of the applause, is over and over again placed in situations where moral courage and true bravery are required, which if displayed upon the battle-field would win for their possessor a deathless fame. It is a qualification, of the importance of which a very few years of practice will convince you. Without it you will be fettered, and shorn of half your strength. Your course will be one of hesitancy and irresolution. You will be forced to give place to those, who in the hour of danger have been found to “quit themselves like men.”

It seems hardly necessary that I should say a single word even upon the necessity for the strictest *Temperance*. If there ever was

a profession in which a clear head and steady hand are demanded, it is ours. A physician who would secure the confidence of those around him, should be above the reach of suspicion in this respect. Do not deceive yourselves with the idea that an occasional indulgence is harmless: "the tree is never rudely shaken without some of its leaves falling to the ground." But independently of this, the idle habits that are universally associated with the addiction to even moderate indulgence, are ruinous to the discipline of a mind whose faculties should be ever ready to obey its call, and the dreary nakedness of winter is thus brought on long before the season should have commenced in the regular course of nature. Youth is the season for the acquisition of knowledge, and not for the abuse of the faculties upon which that acquisition depends. Those who like yourselves are but just released from the *name* of students are too apt to imagine that in receiving the title for which they have been striving, they have attained the goal at which they may rest and indulge themselves. But the truth is you have but reached the mine and learned how to dig into its depths for its hidden treasures. Be not content merely to cull the glittering grains that lie scattered on the surface, else you will be for ever poor and unknown to fame. "One fountain there is whose deep-lying vein has only just begun to throw up its silver drops among mankind; a fountain which will allay the thirst of millions, and will give to those who drink from it abundant peace and joy. It is KNOWLEDGE. The fountain of intellectual cultivation, which gives health to the mind, makes clear the vision, brings joy to man's life, and breathes over his soul's destiny a deep repose. Go and drink therefrom, thou whom fortune has not favored, and thou wilt soon find thyself rich. Thou mayest go forth into the world and find thyself everywhere at home: thou mayest enjoy thyself in thine own little chamber: thy friends are everywhere around thee: Nature, Antiquity, Heaven—all are accessible to thee."*

In this teeming age, no one *can* stand still. He must either advance with the rest, or give place, and fall into the rear. In this age of progress let it not be said of you that you have eaten the bread of idleness and made no return, for it is the *young men* who are to be the working bees in the great hive of society, and to whom

* Bremer.

the arms of the profession are stretched, imploring help—let them not plead in vain!

I pass in conclusion, to another attribute of the true physician, for which I bespeak your kind consideration. He should be a *Christian man*. Within the recollection of some of the youngest of those who hear me, the mere name of physician was associated, and too often with reason, with open and avowed infidelity, or with a recklessness to all religious duty or restraint which practically was no better than scepticism. The causes of this deplorable state of things are not shrouded in mystery. Men accustomed to bring medical theories to the test of experiment, nay, to actual demonstration, would be satisfied with nothing else than this. Truth, whether in moral or physical science, was placed in the same category and subjected to the same tests. And where, as must often occur in the deep mysteries of a revealed religion, *faith* must take the place of sensible demonstration, there the evidence was pronounced insufficient, and the hasty conclusion reached that their assent could not be reasonably demanded. And thus it is that the wisdom of God becomes foolishness to man. Nature is full of mysteries which no effort of science shall ever be able to unfold, and why may not the God of nature, in revealing his spiritual kingdom, also announce truths, which, though not contrary to reason, are yet beyond its finite grasp?

Another cause of this insensibility to the claims of a revealed faith, has been the natural tendency to deify nature, forgetting that

“Nature is but the name for an effect
Whose cause is God.”

And thus the hand of Him who has constructed the curious machinery has been forgotten, the God of nature has been unrecognised in his own kingdom.

A want of religion, revealed as well as natural, is not a sign of profound philosophy, for the deepest philosophers have bowed before that Being in whose sight their utmost wisdom is as foolishness; not of extensive erudition, for the most universal scholars have left behind them imperishable monuments of their devotion; not of superior spirit, for the greatest heroes have been as renowned for their religion as for their courage; not of high fashion, for persons of the

most exalted rank have been no less conspicuous for unaffected piety ; but on the contrary, the want of true religion marks a man as not valiant (as he may try to persuade himself), since his contracted view of things renders him unconscious of what he braves ; and shows him the farthest possible from well-bred, since good manners would have taught him to treat with deference even the errors, if they be such, of the great and good of all ages and of all nations.

But in calling your attention to this department of the subject my mind has been occupied, not so much with personal obligations, which but few have the temerity to disclaim, as it is with the commanding influence for good, which a physician may exercise whose mind has been awakened to the importance of this subject. Aware of danger to which other eyes are blinded, and foreseeing the issues of a disease which friends are unwilling to contemplate, he has it in his power by the utterance of a few kind impressive words to sound the note of warning, to remind his patient of the necessity of securing the one thing needful, for which nothing can be exchanged. A suggestion from such a source will come with more than ordinary emphasis, and to the satisfaction of having discharged a solemn trust will be added the assurance, "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars, for ever and ever."

Gentlemen, in attempting to discharge the duty which has been confided to me, I have aimed at a plain, honest statement of a few simple, but most important rules connected with the discharge of the honorable profession to which you have this day been admitted. Subjects possessing more of novelty, giving a wider field for imagination, and for what is popularly termed eloquence, might have been selected, but I mistake the impulses of your own hearts at this interesting moment, if you do not feel that the time has been better occupied with what so nearly concerns the great practical duties of life, duties which if neglected, involve, with that neglect, the loss of confidence, and those harrowings of conscience which embitter the soul, rendering life itself a burden. There are laws in the moral as well as in the physical economy, which we cannot violate with impunity. And what is a far nobler incentive to exertion, there is a course of private, as well as public conduct, which while it alone comports with the dignity of an accountable being, will never fail to purchase for its subject the esteem of all the good,

to say nothing of the consciousness of having lived and labored for no selfish end, but for the benefit of our fellow-men. We have watched, with an interest, which they alone can appreciate who are charged with the duty of public instruction, not only your progress in a science on which so many issues are dependent, but also your whole career as members of this institution. You have been adjudged competent to enter the lists with those who are called to confront disease and suffering in every form, and of this confidence you have received the pledge under the seal of the institution.

We trust that in the good Providence of God we may often meet in coming time ; that however separated, we may hear of your successful labors ; that upon the groundwork you have laid, you are erecting a noble superstructure, covering yourselves and your Alma Mater with well-earned honors, building for yourselves a reputation which is not to be coveted for purposes of self-gratulation, but as an evidence that you have indeed proved yourselves the benefactors of mankind. That much of your success will depend upon your own exertion, it is needless for me to say. We live in an age, and under civil institutions which minister the strongest inducements for the honest, faithful use of the talents with which we have been intrusted. Genius cannot be repressed, cannot be stunted in such a soil. Talents, application, and an honest direction of their powers, cannot be despoiled of their bright rewards. Position in society, influence of friends, may *force* men into stations for which they are not fitted, but they cannot *keep* them there. The want of them cannot prevent the elevation of one who feels that he has the strength, which needs but to be put forth, to secure for him the crown of victory. And these are incentives to a noble ambition, to an honorable rivalry ; these have fortified the souls of men whose circumstances in life were the most discouraging. With such promises before you we bid you go forth from the retreats of science to the bustling scenes of action, mindful of the duties you owe to yourselves, to this college, and to the country you are bound to serve. I have already told you that you have an arduous task before you ; yours will not be a life of selfish ease, and pleasurable indulgence. It will have its trials, its perplexities, its annoyances. Often they will weigh heavily upon you, prostrating both mind and body. But you will have your comforts and encouragements also, thus making existence what it is to all, a shifting, checkered scene, reminding us that

“Life is but a moment’s trance,
Of memories, hopes and fears.”

but that when the fever and bustle are over, there shall be a rest for the weary, a reward for the faithful, a crown for the victor, enduring peace for all.

Gentlemen, it has been said that it is a sad and painful thing to feel that we are about to “do anything for the last time,” however trifling. It awakens associations of that hour when the “last of earth” approaches, and the shadows of the grave seem thrown forward. We realize this in the parting of friends, in the abandonment of accustomed duties, in all the changing scenes of life. It throws a sadness over the spirit, of which we cannot divest ourselves. And of this how are we not now reminded? Your cares, your duties here are closed, the familiar faces will soon have gone, and the well-known voices be silent within our walls. Our duties to you are also closed. We meet here a few moments to be separated, it may be, until with the myriads of earth we surround the bar of God. Take then, gentlemen, our counsels, our wishes, our fervent prayers that the choicest blessings may rest upon you, that your lives may be prolonged, and that they may be lives of usefulness, such as will secure for you the rewards of time, and above all that of eternity, for which life has been given. Trusting in Him who directeth all our steps, and relying upon your own noble promptings to an elevated and honorable career, we dismiss you to the labors to which you may be called, assuring you of our interest and sympathy, and bidding you an affectionate *farewell*.

